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ABSTRACT

The North Carolina Advancement School treats underachievement by attempting to improve the status of the psychological factors underlying it. It is held that one of the major problems with the study of underachievement has been its isolation from average achievers. To compensate, the Achievement School has collected comparable data during 1969-70 academic year on 1200 children representing the average school population of North Carolina. Data were collected on achievement, behavior, self concept, attitudes towards school and school related activities, and the acceptance of responsibility for one's own behavior. Preliminary analysis of data for sixth-graders showed that on all variables underachievers are well below the normative group before treatment. After a four month period of treatment, underachievers approached the norm on all variables and in some instances exceeded the norm group. Presently, all data are undergoing sophisticated analysis. Several follow-up studies are also in progress. For related reports see UD 011 076-080. (JM)

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NORTH CAROLINA ADVANCEMENT SCHOOL

AN INTERIM RESEARCH REPORT

SUMMER, 1970

The three previous papers have described in some detail a summary of the research which has been conducted at the Advancement School during the past two and one-half years. They have described the development of a research instrument for assessing behavioral characteristics of underachievers, and the school's basic philosophic approach as seen through the eyes of a counselor. These data strongly support the notion that the Advancement School's approach to the treatment of underachievement is working.

From research conducted at the Advancement School and from research collected nationally, it is well-established that the phenomenon of underachievement is significantly related to psychological and attitudinal variables. The basic approach utilized at the school has been to treat these dimensions of the problem first, having faith in the belief that positive increase in such constructs will result in accompanying growth in academic areas. This research report will attempt to describe additional research in progress intended to describe the phenomenon in more sophisticated ways. It represents our continuing efforts to define further the multi-variant conditions of the problem.

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A Normative Study. One of the major problems with the study of underachievement has been its isolation from average achievers--students who seem to be coping adequately with school settings. To compensate for this problem, the Advancement School has collected comparable data on the average school population of North Carolina.

During the 1969-70 academic year data was collected on twelve hundred school children. The data included such dimensions as achievement, behavior, self-concept, attitudes toward school and school related activities, and the acceptance of responsibility for one's own behavior. Although the analysis of these data are not yet complete, preliminary results are most encouraging and add further credence in support of the Advancement School's philosophy and previous research. Graphs 1-4 vividly illustrate some of these preliminary findings in the areas of self-concept, attitudes, responsibility toward learning, and behavior. Each of the graphs presents a norm line which is descriptive of the average sixth and seventh grades in the state of North Carolina. The broken lines represent data collected on Advancement School sixth graders prior to attendance and after four months of treatment.

A study of these graphs clearly illustrates that on all variables underachievers are well below the normative group before treatment. After a four month period of treatment underachievers approached the norm line on all variables and in some instances exceeded the norm group. This indicates that underachievers became more like the average achiever after attendance at the school on the measured variables. Comparable data is available on achievement measures and on students at other grade levels. Although these data have not been totally analyzed, preliminary inspection has revealed similar results. In addition, all data are now undergoing more sophisticated analysis to aid in establishing meaningful relationships which exist among variables. Needless to say, the staff of the Advancement School is exceedingly encouraged and excited by these preliminary results.

Follow-up Studies. The success of the Advancement School's program is determined ultimately by how a child performs after he returns home and to his public school. Consequently, the research department is continually collecting follow-up data on former students, usually at one-year intervals. Thus far, much of this data has not been totally analyzed. Data presently analyzed indicate the following:

1. The school drop-out rate among underachievers who attended the Advancement School is significantly less than underachievers who did not attend the school.

2. Growth in attitudes toward school and self produced at the Advancement School tend to be sustained upon the student's return to his home setting.

3. Students who have attended the Advancement School tend to seek help from teachers and counselors on their own volition significantly more frequently than underachievers who did not attend the school.

4. Although over-all achievement growth as measured by grades is not statistically significant, those students who did well at the Advancement School continue to improve upon return to the home setting.

Again, these results are most supportive of the school's over-all approach. Continual assessment of these data has allowed the school to constantly improve its program in attempting to reach every child in some significant way.

Summer Workshops for Teachers. Approximately 120 teachers and school administrators from throughout the state have attended workshops at the Advancement School this summer. The major thrust of the workshops has been to change basic attitudes of teachers toward children and the learning process. Major emphasis has been afforded to working with teams from specific schools in helping them identify problems peculiar to their situation and to the establishment of educational priorities. The staff of the Advancement School will continue to work with these teams throughout the coming years on a consultant basis to aid in evaluation and implementation of programs planned during these workshops.

One of the residual effects of the workshops has been the establishment of field testing and research centers in local schools. Many teams will serve as extensions of the Advancement School's program and philosophy in testing out the applicability of research findings in typical public school settings.

Additional Research in Progress. In addition to the above, the Advancement School is engaged in the development of research projects which are believed to be of significant import to public schools of the state. Some of these are:

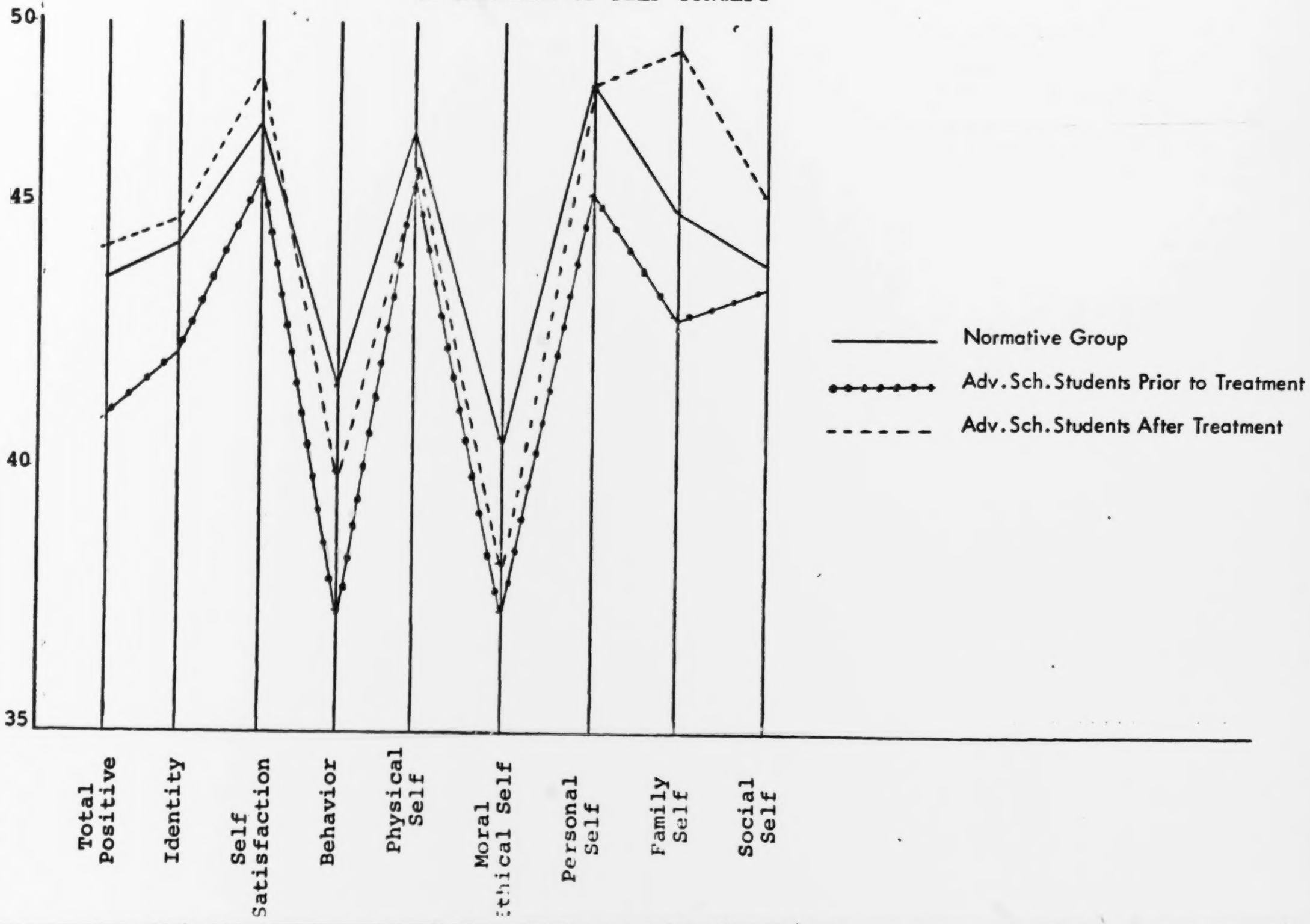
1. The development of modalities tests which the typical classroom teacher can use in diagnosing the specific styles by which a child learns best.
2. Description of the development of an empathetic classroom environment which will enhance the student's self-image and attitudes toward school learning.
3. The development of specific classroom techniques emphasizing student self-direction and self-evaluation which will enable the student to become more responsible and productive.

4. Continual assessment of the behavioral dimensions of underachievement and the development of teaching-learning styles to effectively cope with these dimensions.

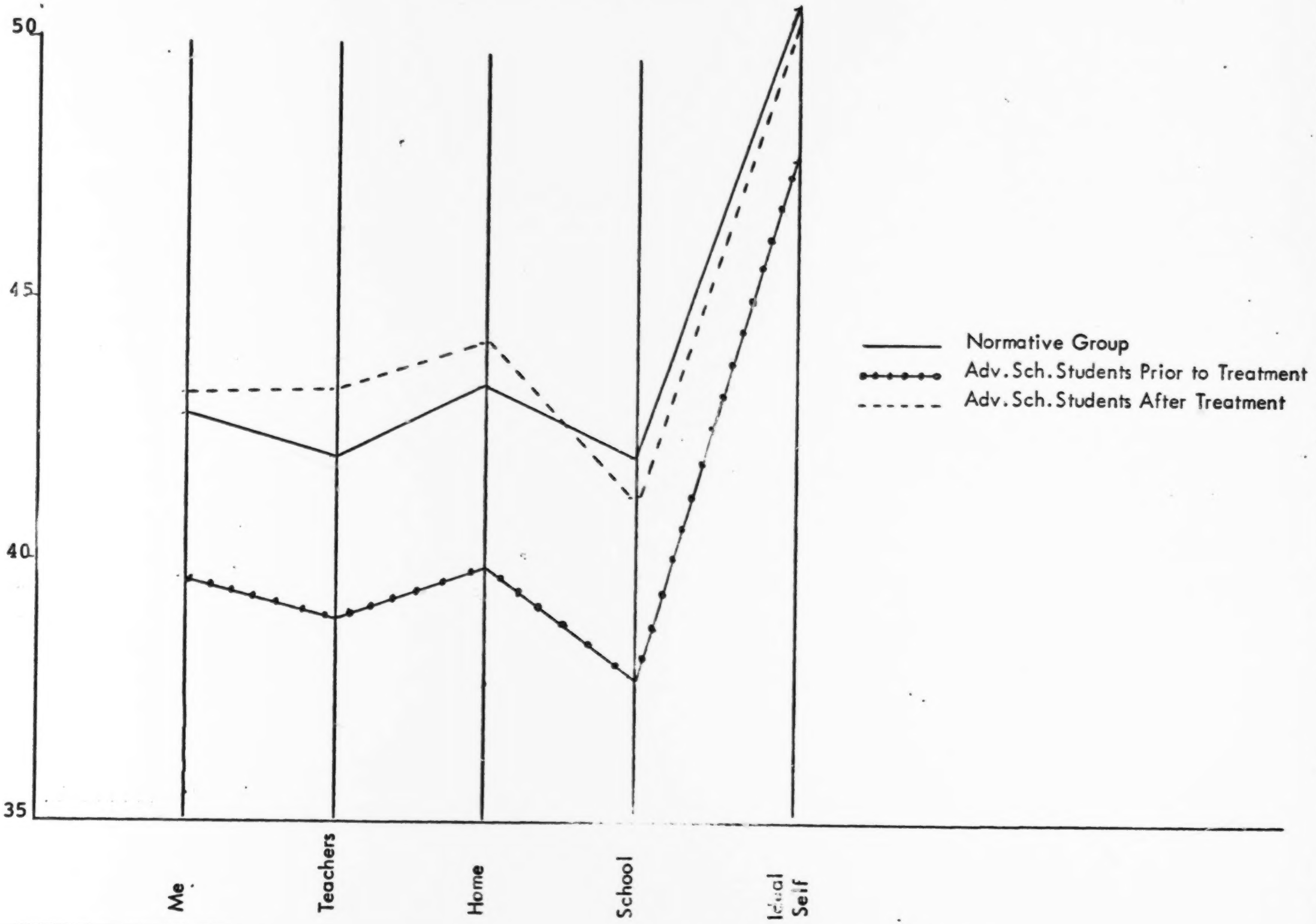
The above description has been intended as a summary of significant research in progress. It is not intended to be all-inclusive. As results are finalized, the Advancement School will continue its efforts to disseminate findings to teachers, patrons of the schools, and educational and political leaders of our state.

GRAPH 1

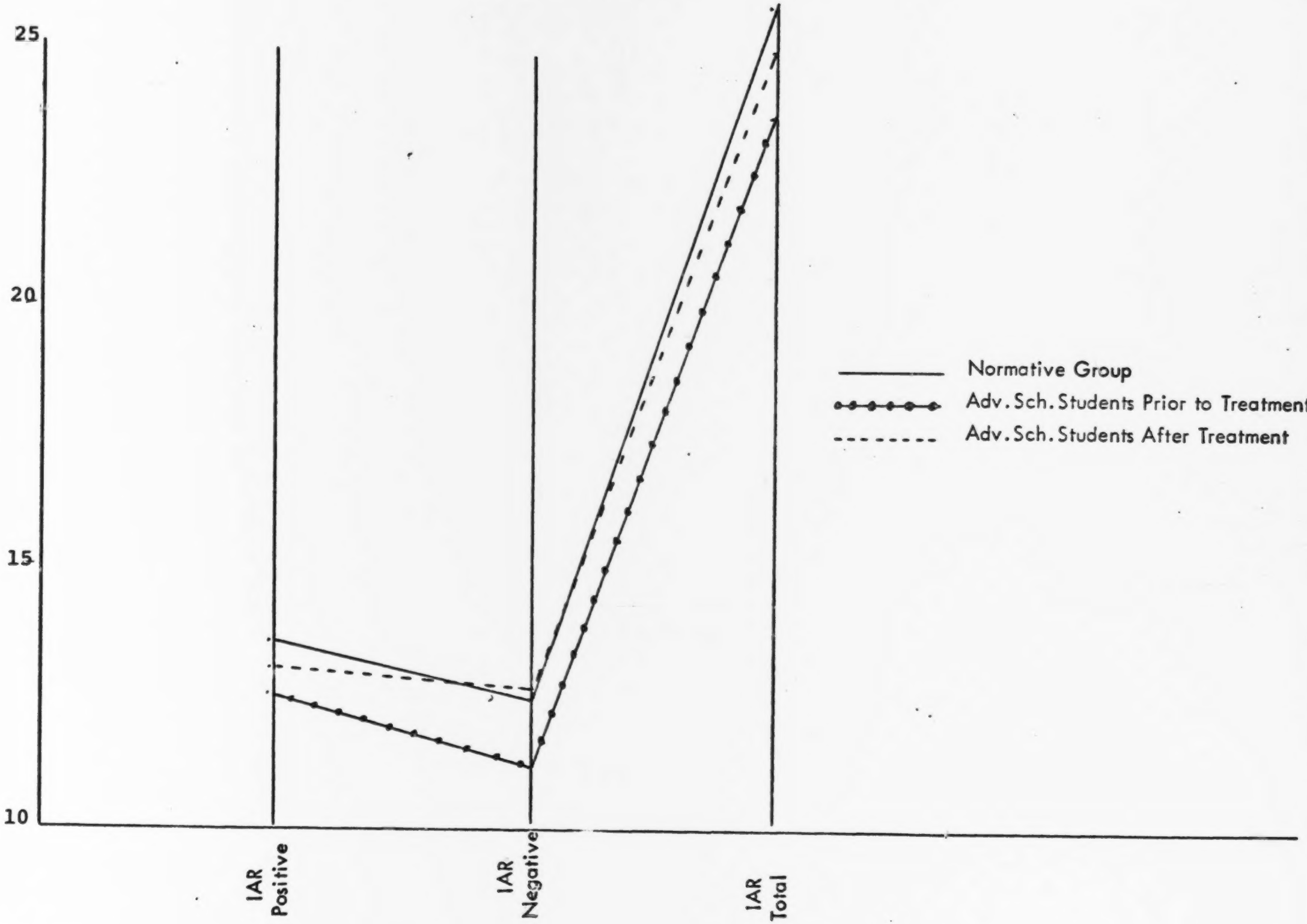
PROFILES OF
COMPARISONS OF NORMATIVE GROUP
WITH ADVANCEMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS
PRIOR TO TREATMENT AND AFTER TREATMENT
ON MEASURES OF SELF-CONCEPT



PROFILES OF COMPARISONS OF NORMATIVE GROUP WITH ADVANCEMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS PRIOR TO TREATMENT AND AFTER TREATMENT ON MEASURES OF ATTITUDES



PROFILES OF COMPARISONS OF NORMATIVE GROUP WITH ADVANCEMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS PRIOR TO TREATMENT AND AFTER TREATMENT ON MEASURES OF ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR BEHAVIOR



PROFILES OF COMPARISONS OF NORMATIVE GROUP WITH ADVANCEMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS PRIOR TO TREATMENT AND AFTER TREATMENT ON MEASURES OF BEHAVIOR